New Oswald files surface

Fred Pool 6/22/98

WASHINGTON (AP) — Documents given by Boris Yeltsin to President Clinton on Sunday could shed light on whether Lee Harvey Oswald schemed to kill President Kennedy while he was an American defector living in the Soviet Union, assassination researchers said.

Mr. Yeltsin's surprise gift to Mr. Clinton — declassified papers containing information gathered by Russian intelligence agencies about Mr. Oswald — are a "monumental breakthrough," said historian Kermit Hall, a former member of the Assassination Records Review Board. That federal panel, which went out of business last September, was created to gather all known records regarding the assassination.

Mr. Hall said the Russian records — which the board was unable to obtain when it sent Hall and two other board members to Russia in 1996 — could show what Mr. Oswald was thinking and doing in the years leading up to the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas.

"It's really critical," said Mr. Hall, an Ohio State University historian. "This could tell us if he was scheming to do anything."